

Lindsay M. Shields
Lesson Plan

Shakin' It Up With Willy: Classic Cannon Meets Hip-Hop

AGE/GRADE: any (can be adapted)

TIME: approximately 1 hour

OBJECTIVE: Applying Shakespeare to the present day.

GOALS:

1. Students will engage with each other using Shakespearian language.
2. Students will discuss the role and relevance of Shakespeare's texts.
3. Students will create original poetry, combining the languages of hip-hop artists and Shakespeare.
4. Students will compare the texts of Shakespeare and popular hip-hop artists to identify similarities and differences in language, theme, and accessibility.
5. Students will practice small and large group skills of speaking at a proper volume, listening to others while they are speaking, asking relevant questions, making a verbal and/or written contribution, and dissecting and supporting group members' ideas while discussing texts.
6. Students will practice presentation skills of eye contact, speaking at a proper volume, maintaining good posture, using appropriate gestures/body movements, and interacting with the audience by reading their poetry aloud.

MATERIALS:

Instructor: photos of presidential candidates, slips of paper with lines from Shakespeare and popular hip-hop artists, blank paper for groups, glue/tape for groups, copies of "Shakespearian Insult Kit", copies of two Shakespeare sonnets and two choruses of related hip-hop music, computer with "audacity" or other recording program (for archival/publishing/podcasting purposes)

Students: notebooks, writing utensils, creative minds

PROCEDURE:

PART A: Introduction to Shakespeare

1. **ON THE BOARD:** What are some facts, if any, you know about Shakespeare?
 - a. Extra information: Shakespeare had a vocabulary of nearly 30,000 words
 - b. He invented thousands of words, 1700 of which are in common use, including "assassination"
 - c. He wrote his first play at 25 years old
2. Shakespeare is well-known for his insults. Right now with political mudslinging going on, we will create Shakespearian insults for our political candidates
 - a. Hand out sheets
 - b. Explain sheets
 - c. Hand out pictures of candidates

PART B: Found Poems

1. Now that you have successfully used Shakespearian language, we will pair it with language you may be more familiar with. We are going to create found poems. Keep in mind that I will have your groups share with the class.
2. Found Poems:
 - a. Divide into small groups
 - b. Each group gets a sheet of paper and tape/glue
 - c. Each group draws 7 lines from each of 2 hats
 - d. Groups arrange lines to form a “found poem”
 - e. Discuss your group’s poem:
 - i. What is similar/different about the languages used? The structure?
 - ii. What is/are the theme(s)?
 - iii. What is difficult/easy to understand?
 - iv. Which parts of this poem are accessible? Inaccessible? Why?
 - v. What resources could you consult to understand this poem better?
 - vi. BONUS: can you identify which artists wrote/sang the popular music lines?
 - f. Decide who is going to read the poem to the class. Use appropriate posture, volume, and gestures. Be sure and tell the class the poem’s theme(s) before you begin. Classmates listen to the poem as it is being read.
 - g. After a pause, the poem is read a second time. Classmates may take notes on their thoughts/feelings/observations.
 - h. The class then has the opportunity to discuss their thoughts/feelings/observations. The group presenting is then given the opportunity to explain their points of view.
 - i. Each group who presents should receive feedback on their presentations and poems.
 - j. Large group discussion on the five questions on the board and any other ideas that come to mind.

PART C: Willy Shakes and hip-hop

1. Remind the class of what they did the previous day.
2. Say, “Now I’ll hand out a Shakespearian sonnet and the chorus of a hip-hop song.”
 - a. What is the basic definition of a sonnet?
 - i. Means “little song”, 14 lines, rhyme scheme, iambic pentameter
 - b. What is the basic definition of a chorus?
 - i. Means “circular dance”, a line or group of lines repeated in a song, usually a summary/theme of a song
3. In your small groups, discuss the same five questions you used to talk about your group’s found poem.
4. As a large group, let’s talk about the five questions and some others...
 - a. What are the similarities/differences between the found poems, the sonnets, and the hip-hop choruses?
 - b. Have themes changed over the years?
 - c. Is Shakespeare relevant? Why or why not?
 - d. What are some other ways we can explore Shakespeare?

ASSESSMENT:

- Keep a class grid to keep track of who says what during class and group discussion
- Make a tally sheet for presenters based on the class “requirements” of a good presentation
- Travel to groups during small group work to gauge who is on task and who needs support
- With found poems: does the group explain them?, do the poems make justifiable sense?

IDEAS FOR EXPANSION/HOMEWORK:

Have students:

- match a sonnet to a popular music chorus they like
- write insults as captions to photographs
- act out their found poems
- use Shakespearian insults to create their own poems
- create background music/a beat for their found poems
- illustrate their found poems or the similarities/differences between the choruses and sonnets they looked at